Journal of Religion & Film

Volume 4
Issue 1 *April 2000*

Article 2

4-1-2000

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Recommended Citation

Lyden, John C. (2000) "The Apocalyptic Cosmology of Star Wars," *Journal of Religion & Film*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 2.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.jrf.04.01.02
Available at: https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol4/iss1/2

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The Apocalyptic Cosmology of Star Wars

Abstract

The paper analyzes the saga of *Star Wars* as a text that has borrowed extensively from biblical apocalyptic. There is a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil; a great cataclysm is foretold, but the faithful will survive with the help of God (The Force); a messiah figure (Luke) appears; and a new world order will come about in which justice triumphs and wickedness is punished. This myth is made relevant to modem viewers by being framed as a battle of technology vs. the natural human: the machine Vader vs. the human Anakin, the Death Star vs. the Force, Imperial walkers vs. primitive Ewoks. The films' apparent technophilia is cover for a technophobic message: we must remember our humanity lest we be absorbed or destroyed by our machine creations.

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This article is available in Journal of Religion & Film: https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol4/iss1/2

In a year which has featured the first new *Star Wars* movie in 16 years, media critics have finally begun to notice the religious themes in this most popular of all film series. And while the religious elements may be more obvious in *The Phantom Menace*, they have in fact been there from the beginning of the series (in episode four). Indeed, the incredible success of the *Star Wars* films is not due only (and I would argue, not primarily) to marketing or special effects, but to their ability to tap into basic religious or mythological concepts with which viewers can connect.

It is well-known, for example, that George Lucas self-consciously constructed the screenplay for the first film under the influence of popular mythologist Joseph Campbell. In an address to the National Arts Club in 1985, Lucas noted that he was entirely without direction until he stumbled upon Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.[1] And the stages of Campbell's monomyth, outlined in that book, do indeed suggest the structure of Lucas' screenplay: the hero (Luke) is called to the adventure; he initially refuses the call; supernatural aid is supplied (Ben Kenobi), which enables the adventure to proceed; he passes the threshold (Mos Eisley) and enters the belly of the whale (The Deathstar). He meets the goddess (Leia) whom he must rescue, and loses the father-figure (Ben) who becomes a spiritual presence to him. After escaping the Death Star, he must return to it, this time to destroy the monster.[2]

However, it is my contention that reading *Star Wars* through the lens of Campbell's philosophy does not do justice to all that is in the films, religiously speaking. Although the basic storyline does indeed replicate Campbell's categories, Lucas did not intend to be a mouthpiece for Campbell's thought, which diverges from Lucas's own religious sensibilities in a number of important ways. Lucas used a variety of religious sources to construct the world of *Star Wars*, including biblical apocalyptic. It is not my intention to demonstrate that *Star Wars* is chiefly an apocalyptic text or only that, but to show that Lucas utilized apocalyptic ideas, among other religious notions, in the construction of the *Star Wars* universe. To do so, I must first spend some time showing the inadequacy of the Campbellian interpretation of Star Wars, due to the fact that many people have interpreted the films' religious elements solely through those categories.

To understand Campbell's view of *Star Wars*, one must have some sense of his overall philosophy of religion. Campbell had very little formal education in religious studies. He studied Medieval European literature, Romance philology, and modem literature, especially the works of James Joyce and Thomas Mann. His main encounter with religion began through editing the posthumous writings of Indologist Heinrich Zimmer and through working with Swami Nikhilananda translating and editing the *Upanishads*. On the subject of mythology, he was an autodidact without formal training.[3] When one looks at Campbell's assessment of

DOI: https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.jrf.04.01.02

religions in his published writings, this background is evident. Many of his examples come from modem or medieval literature with little explicit reference to religion. When he does speak of religions, he shows a decided preference for Hinduism's conception of the divine and salvation, and in particular, the traditions of monistic Vedanta. He degrades the western religions, Judaism in particular, for sharply distinguishing God from the world. "The Biblical image of the universe simply won't do any more,[4] writes Campbell, and he also claims that in eastern religions the ultimate divine mystery is sought beyond all human categories of thought and feeling, beyond names and forms .... Anthropomorphic attributions of human sentiments and thoughts to a mystery beyond thought is--from the point of view of Indian thought--a style of religion for children."[5]

One may note that this judgment even preferences non-dualistic Vedanta over the devotional forms of theistic bhakti practiced by most Hindus. In any case, the "proper" religious teaching of identity with the Godhead is not taught in the West, according to Campbell, because it is viewed as heresy or blasphemy; Campbell even claims Jesus was crucified for claiming identity with God.[6] This is the sort of oversimplification of historical and theological matters in which Campbell revels. He generalizes about religions, concluding all that do not preach monism are superstitious and parochial. He reserves particular venom for the Jewish claim to be the chosen people who have received a unique revelation from

God.[7] That this denigration of Judaism is tied to Campbell's own anti-Semitism has been well documented by Robert Segal and Maurice Friedman.[8]

Campbell's monism also represents a "psychologizing' of religion and myth, and here he is under the influence of Karl Jung in particular. He tries to reduce all religion to a journey of "self-discovery" brought about by identification with the story of the "hero" reproduced in every myth. One of the most striking things one finds in reading Campbell's works is his amazing ability to ignore the points of the individual tales he is telling; all are made to fit the mold of the one 'true' story of the "Hero with a thousand faces" mapped out in the book of that title.[9] There as well he concludes that the end of the hero's journey is a union with the divine in which all personal identity and difference is annihilated.[10] But finally, this identity is not interpreted as the union of the individual with a transcendent absolute, for there is no transcendent; rather, the identity of all is interpreted in immanentist categories, in that the individual realizes he himself is the absolute, the creator, the center of his own universe.[11] Each person is to realize this, that each of us makes our own universe and so is responsible for all that happens in it. This is why Campbell cannot take the problem of undeserved suffering seriously; we deserve everything that happens to us, for we make our own universe.[12] In this he sounds more like Jean-Paul Sartre or Friedrich Nietzsche than the great religions of history. This view also represents a reduction of reality to that which we experience and

perceive, and so it cannot take seriously any external mystery of transcendence.[13] The only "mystery" is what lurks in my own unconscious, which can be plumbed via depth psychology and interpretation of my myths and dreams. In this Campbell has also very much influenced the New Age movement in its use of mythology and religion.

After George Lucas invited Campbell to Skywalker Ranch to view all three *Star Wars* films in a single day, Campbell gave his approval to the message of the films in interviews with Phil Cousineau and Bill Moyers. In his interpretation, we again see the hallmarks of his own philosophy of religion. Darth Vader is a "bureaucrat, living not in terms of himself but in terms of an imposed system." Like him, each of us must learn to develop as a human individual by "holding to your own ideals for yourself and, like Luke Skywalker, rejecting the system's impersonal claims upon you.[14] Immorality comes when we do not listen to our own inner voices and instead listen to others. "The world is full of people who have stopped listening to themselves or have listened only to their neighbors to learn what they ought to do, how they ought to behave, and what the values are they should be living for.[15] Again, this message resembles Nietzsche's philosophy more than that of George Lucas, I would argue, as this is Campbell's own moral philosophy.

Campbell also gives an immanentist interpretation to the idea of the Force. The Force is "within" us, he points out, and for him this means not that the sacred

is both beyond us and within us (like the Holy Spirit in Christian thought, or Brahman in Hinduism), but only that which lies within us. The Force is "what best fosters the flowering of our humanity in this contemporary life," and as such it is not a "first cause" or a "higher cause," but "a more inward cause." "Higher is just up there, and there is no 'up there.' We know that. That old man up there has been blown away. You've got to find the Force inside you."[16]

That Campbell's interpretation of *Star Wars* need not be the only one is clear even by an examination of Lucas's own words about the meaning of the films. In a recent interview with Bill Moyers in "*Time*" magazine, he said that he did not intend *Star Wars* to be a replacement for the old religions, nor does he say that the eastern religions are "closer" to the truth than the western (as Campbell does).

I don't see *Star Wars* as profoundly religious. I see *Star Wars* as taking all the issues that religion represents and trying to distill them down into a more modem and easily accessible construct--that there is a greater mystery out there .... I put the Force into the movie in order to try to awaken a certain kind of spirituality in young people - more a belief in God than a belief in any particular religious system. I wanted to make it so that young people would begin to ask questions about the mystery.[17]

DOI: https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.jrf.04.01.02

The mystery is clearly transcendent for Lucas, not merely a reflection of some internal psychological structure. "I think that there is a God. No question. What that God is or what we know about God, I'm not sure." Lucas would seem more at home with John Hick's philosophy, that there is a Reality which transcends all the religions and which each is trying to describe as best it can, rather than Campbell's reductionist view that all religions can be boiled down to a single psychological process of auto-suggested divinity. Lucas also believes that his films do not supply religious answers, but ask questions that are then given various answers by the different religions. This seems to echo Paul Tillich's method of correlation, which claimed that culture can ask the questions of existence but only revelation can answer them. Lucas actually likes the fact that a number of religions can find their own ideas reflected in the *Star Wars* films; they fill in the answer to the question with the content of their own faith.[18]

In the process of asking basic questions about the meaning of life and how we should live, however, the *Star Wars* films do give some guidelines about the ways in which those questions might be asked or answered. Lucas has taken ideas from numerous religions of the world and combined them into a syncretistic mix which works. Just as he freely borrowed from various genres in constructing *Star Wars* - the western, swashbucklers, samurai films, film noir, world war two films - so he also shows his skill as a filmmaker in his ability to synthesize mythological

and religious concepts from around the world. Again, this is not Campbell's monomyth, I would claim, but a polyglot of religious languages in which each contributes something to a pluralistic whole of diversified parts--albeit with a western interpretation. I will focus on Lucas' use of apocalyptic ideas, in particular.

There is considerable consensus among scholars about the basic elements which define apocalyptic, especially the apocalyptic of biblical religion. An "apocalypse," of course, is a disclosing of secrets, especially the plan for the destiny of the world to which the divine power will bring it. A radical discontinuity between the present and future ages is envisioned: as C.K. Barrett puts it, "History would, as it were, take a leap to a new level, on which the judgments of God would be more plainly visible; or, better, God would, by entering history, either personally or through a representative, introduce into it a new factor which would revolutionize its course."[19]

God is in control of history; it has a destiny which will be fulfilled, though it requires radical change accompanied by considerable turmoil. In other words, before things get better, things will get much worse.[20] This tribulation leads to a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil in which these powers are envisioned in starkly dualistic terms; there is no ambiguity about which is which. Humans are called upon to make their choice for good or evil, or as Persian apocalyptic puts it, "truth" or "the lie"[21] - and depending on their choice, they will

either be rewarded or punished by God in the end. A final resurrection of the faithful follows in which they are re-united with God and each other in a restored communion of the faithful. All of this may be accomplished with the aid of a Messiah figure who acts as God's intermediary.[22]

Apocalyptic functions religiously, scholars tell us, as a comfort to the faithful in times of persecution. The current persecution is viewed as the tribulation which must precede the final judgment and restoration of the faithful. The faithful are told of their future reward to encourage them to remain steadfast and not give in to the powers of evil or the temptation to forsake their faith.[23] Apocalyptic also functions politically as a critique of the established order which is denounced as an incarnation of evil; the predicted future order, that which ought to be, calls for "cataclysmic change: the humbling of the mighty and the exaltation of the meek." Hope for this new order is a remedy to anxiety and frustration, conveying a sense of confidence and one's own righteousness.[24]

How many of these features are found in the *Star Wars* films? A number of them are instantly recognizable. There is certainly a cosmic battle between good and evil, clearly envisioned as opposites, and the fate of the whole galaxy hangs on the outcome. The evil is personified first by Darth Vader, and later by the Emperor who is trying to eliminate self-determination of the planets and bring all in accord with his will. There is some parallel here to the situation of the early Christians and

other politically oppressed groups which have found the authorities unsupportive of their self-determination - in the case of the Christians, there actually were Emperors who persecuted them for failure to honor and obey. Events are also spiraling towards a cataclysmic battle, which can be seen both at the end of the first film (episode 4) as well as to a greater extent at the end of the first trilogy in episode six. Though all appears to be lost at a certain point, the faithful win the day by trusting in the Force - a higher power which is in fact controlling all events. A savior-messiah figures into the plots as well; this figure is Luke in the original trilogy, but in episode one it is Anakin Skywalker, referred to as "the chosen one" whose birth was foretold--a virgin birth, no less. Qui-Gon Jinn maintains that Anakin is the prophesied one who will bring "balance" to the conflict, citing as evidence the fact that his blood contains a higher concentration of "midichlorions" (which allow a Jedi to access the Force) than Yoda's.

The role of faith is quite clear in the movies as well, in particular, episode four (A New Hope). Here Luke has not yet developed the ability to see dead people, move objects, or know the future, and so what he sees of the Force's power is more limited. He observes Obi-Wan's Jedi "mind-trick" (used on dim-witted stormtroopers to evade confiscation of R2-D2); he learns to fight a combat training droid without seeing it; and he hears Obi-Wan's voice after his death. Outside of these few examples, he has little to go on other than his belief that there is a Force

which will help him when he tries to blow up the Death Star without computer assistance. Obi-Wan also shows tree faith in his willingness to give his life for no discernible purpose; he tells Vader, "if you strike me down, I will become more powerful than you can possibly imagine," and it is only this belief that he will be of more help as a spiritual presence to the forces of good which justifies his apparently futile martyrdom. Han Solo, in contrast, opts not to believe in the Force, for as he says: "Kid, I've flown from one end of this galaxy to the other; I've seen a lot of strange stuff; but I've never seen anything to make me believe there's one all-powerful force controlling everything. There's no mystical energy field controlling my destiny. It's all a lot of simple tricks and nonsense." He attributes to luck what Luke and Ben attribute to the Force, and he trusts in his own abilities rather than any transcendent power. (In fact, in this he sounds a lot more like Joseph Campbell than Luke does! Of course, Solo actually fights for the Force without realizing it; a sort of "anonymous Jedi," if you will, whose skepticism about ultimate matters does not prevent him from aiding friends in need.)

Darth Vader is also depicted as a figure who paradoxically bears witness to the power of faith in the Force. When his "ancient religion" is ridiculed by one of the Imperial officers as inadequate next to the technological power of the Death Star, he uses the Force to choke him and asserts that he finds his "lack of faith disturbing." Throughout episode four, Vader appears to be an anachronism in the

Empire, as no one else seems to believe in the mystical dimension he does; his faith is a peculiarity in the otherwise secularized and technologized empire. As Governor Tarkin puts it: "The Jedi are extinct; their fire has gone out in the universe. You, my friend, are all that is left of their religion."

Several things, however, are different beginning in episode five (The Empire Strikes Back). We encounter the Emperor for the first time, and discover that he represents the Dark Side of the Force more powerfully than Vader; he is not simply a bureaucrat like Governor Tarkin was. In addition, Vader seems to have more power: In episode four, Leia makes a crack about Tarkin holding Vader's "leash," likening him to a henchman; now, Vader has his own star cruiser and crew just for the purpose of chasing Luke's friends, and he is free to execute imperial officers whenever they disappoint him. Also in episode five, Luke begins to discover the power of the Force and actually sees some of the things he has only believed up to this point. Obi-wan appears to him and delivers messages; Yoda shows him how to move objects around and see the future. At the same time, Luke lacks the total belief required to be a Jedi; when he says it is impossible to lift his ship out of the Dagobah swamp and Yoda does it for him, he can only say "I don't believe it!" to which master Yoda replies: "That is why you fail." Luke also confronts the power of the Dark Side in a new way, not only through Vader's attempt to capture him but through the revelation that Vader is his father. In this

way, Luke confronts the possibility of evil in himself, in that even his Jedi father turned to the Dark side. Luke's vision in the cave on Dagobah, in which he kills Vader only to find he wears Luke's own face, reinforces this idea that the only evil one needs to fear is the hatred and anger that lurks within oneself.

Episode six of the saga (*Return of the Jedi*) brings all its elements to a conclusion. We see the final apocalyptic battle and Luke faces Vader again. He now accepts Vader as his father, and attempts to redeem him by appealing to his former nature as Anakin Skywalker. In this Luke fails and he is brought before the Emperor for a final testing. Can he resist hate and fear, even when confronted with the destruction of his own friends and the rebel cause? His attempt to remain non-combative breaks down when Vader threatens to turn his sister to the Dark side. In a fit of anger, he chops off his father's hand, just as Vader had chopped off Luke's hand at the end of the previous film. But when the Emperor exhorts Luke to kill Vader and "take your father's place at my side," Luke throws down his weapon. "I am a Jedi, like my father before me," he says. He is able to come to this decision, as he sees himself about to suffer the same fate as his father; in particular, he looks at the stump of Vader's electronic hand and then at his own machine hand which he was given after he lost his own. He resists the temptation to lose his humanity to a technologized and de-personalized identity.

Luke's decision not to fight may appear to be one place in which the film borrows from eastern religious notions of ahimsa, non-violence. But there is a significant difference between his actions and the ethic of the *Bhagavad Gita* in which the Hindu notion of ahimsa is developed. In that text, Krishna advises Arjuna to fight to preserve the world-order of dharma, but to do so without selfish desire or hatred. This is basically the same advice Yoda and Obi-Wan give to Luke; to kill his father, but without giving in to hate or anger. Yet Luke ignores their counsel and refuses to fight him at all. He abandons the "eastern" philosophy of detachment advocated by Ben and Yoda for a more Christian ideal of attachment to those whom one loves. And oddly enough this is what saves them all, as he manages to redeem his father from hatred and violence. Here again, Christian concepts of redemption clearly take center stage, as Luke's willingness to non-violently sacrifice himself(much like Obi-Wan's self-sacrifice in episode four) becomes the key to turning his father back. Granted, in his "conversion" Vader does use violence against the Emperor, but in so doing he eschews the path of violence he has been following since he turned to the Dark side.

In the end of the film, Luke sees the spirit of his redeemed father accompanied by those of Yoda and Obi-wan, an otherworldly salvation of the righteous analogous to the final resurrection of the dead in biblical apocalyptic. It is also worth noting that these figures retain their individuality even in this

apotheosis, contradicting Campbell's monistic vision which would require their dissolution into the absolute. If Obi-wan can sit on a log in the Dagobah swamp and discuss Luke's family tree with him, it appears that the departed are not simply manifestations of some abstract oneness which does away with their personalities.

Much of this tale also transcends the structures of apocalyptic, it can be seen. The future is not completely set; although faith in the Force should bring success, even Yoda does not guarantee this. The Dark forcemasters tend to speak of "destiny" in a way that suggests free will is non-existent; but the good side always allows participants to choose their own destinies, granting that free choice can and does contribute to the direction of events. When Luke asks Yoda (in episode five) if Han and Leia will die, he replies, "Difficult to say. Always in motion is the future." What will happen depends on the choices that individuals make, and this cannot be foretold with complete certainty. That this is so is shown by the errors the Emperor makes in predicting the outcome of Luke's testing, as well as in the fact that Anakin, even as "the chosen one," was corruptible.

Perhaps the most significant difference from traditional apocalyptic, though, is that the function of the *Star Wars* myth does not seem to be to give comfort to the politically persecuted. If *Star Wars* is primarily a myth for United States citizens, it is hard to see how we fall into that category. Of course, if apocalyptic categories are used to describe a battle that has already taken place, it

can actually serve to support the status quo, rather than question it. In this case, the evil has already been vanquished, and represents the previous political order rather than the present one.[25] Apocalyptic form would then be used not to critique the powers that be (the U.S. Government, for example), but rather to support them as the just victors over evil. *Star Wars* does tap into some of this by portraying the Empire as resembling both Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany. Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, authors of *Camera Politica*, support just this interpretation of *Star Wars*. They hold that the films express a conservative ideology that supports the American ideals of individualism, elitism, antistatism, agrarianism, and anti-rationalism.[26] However, their attempt to interpret the films entirely in traditional Marxist terms seems to fall short by reducing the films to their supposed political message of support for western capitalism. Their own survey of viewers seemed to suggest that most did not see the Empire or the rebels in political terms, and even when they did, there was no consistency in assigning a political identity to them--e.g., more viewers believed the Empire resembled a right-wing dictatorship than communism, but most also believed the rebels resembled right-wing freedom fighters more than left-wing revolutionaries.[27]

What Ryan and Kellner are unwilling to grant is that the films have used apocalyptic concepts not primarily for political purposes, but for some other end - and it is in this that the *Star Wars* films may differ most markedly from traditional

apocalyptic. For the "enemy" is not a political "other," but ourselves, or at least the threat that we will lose our humanity to greed and a selfish quest for power - symbolized by the Dark side, and even moreso by the technology of deathstars, imperial walkers, and Vader's own robot body. Virtue triumphs over evil technology, however, not only when the "natural" Ewoks beat stormtroopers and their imperial walkers by "primitive" jungle tactics, but when Darth Vader becomes Anakin Skywalker once again. When we see him unmasked and his humanity restored, even at the moment of death, he is "saved," as he says himself.

All of this, it can be seen, serves to reveal some basic virtues Lucas wants to highlight: the importance of family, the redeeming qualities of love and forgiveness, loyalty, friendship, and faith. These are what viewers like to see, as in so many Hollywood films. And although these values are labeled banal or anachronistic by many critics, these are the virtues the fans appreciate and presumably hope to emulate in their lives. The continual whining about how *Star Wars* is trying to replace "real" religions[28] might subside a bit if we realized that the values it portrays are not entirely negative. As viewers, we are caught up in the struggle between good and evil framed in apocalyptic terms not because we hope for release from political persecution, but because we can relate the story to our own struggles to do good in our personal lives. On a small scale, we all try to be like Luke rather than like Vader. As George Lucas himself puts it:

> Heroes come in all sizes, and you don't have to be a giant hero. You can be a very small hero. It's just as important to understand that accepting self-responsibility for the things you do, having good manners, caring about other people - these are heroic acts. Everybody has the choice of being a hero or not being a hero every day of their lives. You don't have to get into a giant laser-sword fight and blow up three spaceships to become a hero.[29]

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[1] "It was the first time that I really began to focus. Once I read that book I said to myself, this is what I've been doing .... It was all right there and had been there for thousands and thousands of years, as Dr. Campbell pointed out .... It's possible that if I had not run across him I would still be writing Star Wars today." Phil Cousineau, *The Hero's Journey: The World of Joseph Campbell* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), p. 180.

[2] Andrew Gordon, "Star Wars: A Myth for Our Time," in *Screening the Sacred: Religion. Myth. and Ideology in Popular American Film* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 73-82.

[3] Cousineau, pp. Xxv-xxix. (Curriculum Vitae for Campbell).

[4] Joseph Campbell, "The Confrontation of East and West," in *Myths to Live By* (New York: Viking, 1972), p. 89.

[5] Ibid., p. 93.

[6] Ibid., p. 95.

[7] This claim privileges one group's proximity to the divine whereas (in his view) all have the divine "within" them, already. Since Judaism seeks a "relationship" with a named God rather than identity, it claims that relationship is only available "through membership in a certain supernaturally endowed, uniquely favored social group." Ibid., pp. 95-96.

[8] Robert A. Segal, *Joseph Campbell: An Introduction* (New York: Garland, 1987); Maurice Friedman, "Why Joseph Campbell's Psychologizing of Myth Preclude the Holocaust as Touchstone of Reality," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66/2: pp. 385-401.

[9] "It seems to be a temptation that many modem thinkers cannot resist - to put forward their own central discoveries as the core of all the world's religions .... Even when they know something about the world's religions, they do not hesitate to ignore all the phenomena that do not fit their personal perception ...." Friedman, p. 395; "[Campbell] cites hundreds of myths and extricates from them hundreds of archetypes...but he analyzes few whole myths .... He is interested less in analyzing myths than in using myths to analyze human nature." Segal, pp. 137-138.

[10] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), pp. 365-378.

[11] Here I must agree with Friedman against Segal. "Campbell seems to want a unity of inner and outer, as Segal says, yet it is not the actual outer but a mysticized and universalized outer that comes from his projection of his inward philosophy on it." Maurice Friedman, "Psychology, Psychologism, and Myth: A Rejoinder," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67/2, p. 471.

[12] Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 161. Campbell speaks of "loving one's fate" even if it involves suffering, and quotes Nietzsche in support of this ideal. He also quotes the Buddha's dictum that "all life is suffering," ignoring the fact that the Buddha sought a way to escape this, not an affirmation of it.

[13] In an address he delivered shortly after the first men walked on the Moon, Campbell cites the Kantian notion that space and time are mental constructs rather than objective realities, and claims that the "moon flight as an outward journey was outward into ourselves." Even the conquest of outer space is finally only the conquest of another inner mystery, and its significance lies in its ability to tell us more about ourselves. Campbell, "The Moon Walk - The Outward Journey in *Myths to Live By*," p. 239.

[14] Campbell and Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, p. 144.

[15] Ibid., p. 147.

[16] Ibid., p. 148.

[17] "Of Myth and Men," *Time*, April 26 1999, p. 92.

[18] Ibid., p. 93.

[19] C.K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (New York: Harper, 1956), p. 227.

[20] "Children will be born with the white hair of old men, miscarriages will increase, and women will cease to give birth at all. The earth will fail to bring forth fruit .... One nation will rise up against another, wars will tear mankind to pieces, within families fathers will oppose and quarrel with sons, and brothers with brothers.., everything is devastated and destroyed. When at last even the cosmic order disintegrates, the stars will no longer follow their regular courses..."

[21] Eduard Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, tr. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 57.Bruce Lincoln, "Apocalyptic Temporality and Politics in the Ancient World," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 1, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Continuum, 1998), p. 459.

[22] Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), p. 71.

[23] Willi Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), p. 273.

[24] Lincoln, p. 467.

[25] Ibid., p. 466.

[26] Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, *Camera Politica* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 228-236.

[27] Ibid., p. 235.

[28] For just one example of this, see *Maclean's*, May 24, 1999, "The Second Coming," pp. 14-18.

[29] *Time*, p. 94.